

1956

# outposts

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## CONTRIBUTORS

NORMAN NICHOLSON  
MARGARET STANLEY-WRENCH  
ALAN SILLITOE  
GEORGE McBETH  
DAVID SCOTT BLACKHALL  
NOEL SCOTT  
DANNIE ABSE  
DAVID CAJETON MARNO  
CHARLES DURANTY  
HUGH CREIGHTON HILL

TOM WRIGHT  
J. C. HALL  
MARGARET WILLY  
ERIC RATCLIFFE  
LEONARD CLARK  
JOHN BARRON MAYS  
R. L. COOK  
A. P. COURTLAND  
B. EVAN OWEN  
CARLTON WILLIS

DEREK STANFORD

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EDITED BY HOWARD SERGEANT

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*One shilling and sixpence*



## NORMAN NICHOLSON

### *Peculiar Honours*

THE wind will be there,  
In the wondering house,  
Mousing and mumbling  
At the Child's hair,  
Scaring jackdaws of smoke  
To the chimneypot sky—  
The wind will be there.  
But where, Lord, am I?

Clay will be there  
In the hip-and-haw brick,  
Cold earth autumned  
By the fire's glare;  
And mud bright as onyx  
Will slate the roof dry—  
They will be there.  
But where, where am I?

Trees will be there  
In the boughs of the rafters,  
And wild sticks wickered  
For the Child's chair;  
With graining and knot  
In panel and ply—  
Every tree of the air  
And the birds of its joy.

Man's self will be there,  
His flesh and his nature,  
His creature condition,  
His brag and his prayer;  
Encompassed and climaxed  
In limbs of a boy  
Mankind is all there  
And there, now, am I.



## ALAN SILLITOE

### *Anthem*

**R**ETREAT, dig-in, retreat,  
Withdraw your shadow from the crimson  
Gutters that run riot down the street.

Retreat, dig-in, arrange your coat  
As a protective covering,  
A clever camouflage of antidote.

Retreat still more, still more.  
Remembering your images and words:  
Perfect the principles of fang and claw.

The shadows of retreat are wide,  
Town and desert equally  
Bereft of honest hieroglyph or guide.

Release your territory and retreat,  
Record, preserve, and memorise  
The journey where no drums can rouse nor beat.

Defeat is not the question: withdraw  
Into the hollows of the hills  
Until this winter passes into thaw.

Dig-in no more. Turn round and fight  
Forget the wicked and regret the lame  
And travel back the way you came,  
In front the darkness and behind the light.

*Spain.*

## GEORGE MACBETH

### *Capri*

WHERE grim Tiberius of old  
Looked sideways, like a crab, for spies,  
And faithful guards, while sages told  
Of noble plots, killed slaves like flies,  
Now placid business-men recline  
In deep armchairs, discussing stocks,  
Less quarrelsome than grunting swine.  
All passion fails. The echoing rocks  
Forget "the lusts without a name".  
When dark-haired virgins risked the swell,  
And sloughed, like lizards, half their shame,  
Seducers crouched by every shell:  
Now blondes, like bloated star-fish, sprawl,  
And show to empty sands their shapes,  
Or, tipped from capsized dinghies, call  
In vain for help to hollow capes.

## DAVID SCOTT BLACKHALL

### *Cataract*

#### (I)

I WALK to my Gethsemane with a heart  
Shedding the name of light in syllables  
Of faith. Forever is until the knife  
Held by a gentle hand pierces the cloud,  
Probes for the sun and writes with bloody words  
The shape of hills, the faces of my friends,  
The bright ramshackle pageantry of colour,  
The pictures in the fire, the printed page.



Just for a little time and yet forever  
Watch with me, Lord. There is a voice crying  
That this would be a splendid time to die.  
O God! forever is the dark minute  
Forever is until the pyramids  
Blow down and the dust settles on the sea.

(II)

When the bright bubble of a dancing dream  
Quicksilvers through my bandaged head, the night  
Is brighter than the day. But I must tread  
A lonely path before I win my sleep.  
My head stays on the pillow but I see  
In my mind's eye, which does not play me tricks,  
An altar-stone upon the mountain top  
Solemn and silent as an empty Eden.  
This is my pilgrimage. I place my pride  
Upon the sacrificial stone. My eyes  
Have coined the face of grief, they shape his name,  
They still have tears, they know that in the dark  
Direction of my prayer the light will break  
Tomorrow or the next day or the next.

(III)

Say that my sight is blunted, that the world  
Is dark for me, that there's no moon tonight.  
Speak of eclipse and shadow, speak of dusk,  
But if you love me do not say that word.  
My mind is locked against the ultimate fear  
That turning from a bleak dream I shall find  
On lips not yet awake the unlovely black  
Immeasurably unkind and lonely word.  
From prayer to waking runs a stubborn dream.  
There is a beach where it is always summer.  
Sun shall not burn his head nor tide molest  
The sea-child playing in the sand. The dawn  
Dissolves my pain as I set out to find  
That golden boy and bring him home again.

## NOEL SCOTT

### *Odysseus*

**O**UTSIDE the walls they gathered with their toy,  
The huge surprise for all their enemies:  
Cunning in the belly of the beast, and victory.

He was one, that wanderer, with eyes  
In the back of his head to see everything,  
Real and unreal, all men's mysteries.

He is some kind of symbol. His vanquishing  
And all his craft belittle us who seek  
But never find a means, who knock and ring

At hostile gates which never open, shake  
Our fists at towers and feel a tragic pride  
In such heroic gesture, when one look

Into the legendary past arrayed  
Before our schooltime gaze is all we need  
To know what horses made of wood can hide.

## DANNIE ABSE

### *The Seance*

**F**OUR nights horizontal in the tomb;  
coldly, four long nights unaware  
that already I was a hole in the air,  
already like a stone was dumb,  
I listened the wrong side of despair  
to Mary and Martha weeping there,  
fictional ghosts in the sun.



Then blithely I heard the Medium speaking  
ectoplasm on his rubber glove.  
He'd stitch my threadbare skin in love  
with all his religious seeking.  
The world, I remember, dies above,  
but here, my feet lie raw and mauve  
and this hollow body leaking.

"Master, why not leave my corpse alone  
or mourn me with a simple wreath?  
Above me, earth; below me, earth,  
so why this body to exhume?  
Until you raise my heavy death  
I, in my chemistry, lie beneath  
and cannot move a finger bone."

Forced, I rose. The crowd half cheered  
when I knelt with my wired joints creaking  
before that sad and nervous King.  
Then dived low the vulture bird  
but its clacking beak devoured nothing.  
And all the mourners joined to sing  
of the Medium, the unimaginable word.

But a dirty troglodyte from his cave  
is more welcome where I walk among  
for they say I proselytize their young  
with details necrophilic madmen crave.  
I only speak with a dead man's tongue  
of zero plus zero, of one minus one,  
the obscene truth of the grave.



## DAVID CAJETON MARNO

### *The Heron*

THE twig-shanked heron now infibulates the trout,  
his needle beak obtrudes and runs them in,  
gaunt upon brittle stilts he jerks about,  
with pincer-elegance of mannequin.  
Round he parades his rigid and precarious  
joint compasses, and draws a conjured sphere  
of perils for the unwary fishes various  
which run the gauntlet of his private mere.  
Enlarge your sympathies with this in mind  
and as the fluent waters run their courses,  
select the rainbow trout, flirtatious kind,  
and hook them up from waterfalls and forces.  
Swim in my millrace weir of turbulence  
that I might cajole you from your reticence.

## CHARLES DURANTY

### *The sky is roof*

THE sky is roof  
To enormous grief,  
A canopy  
Echoing our pebble voices.  
In the Lenten air  
All gardens are Gethsemani  
Binding with involute flower  
The staves of treason.  
We compose our limbs  
In attitudes of prayer  
But Christ dies daily  
Upon fragrant trees;  
Amongst the tongued fern  
His death is made.

## HUGH CREIGHTON HILL

### *The Beaumont Elegy: Part I*

#### *Standpoint*

WHERE where shall a man stand?  
Where's the fulcrum?  
What use is a tailcoat, a lever,  
the pulpit, these medals,  
faith's telescope, bifocal binoculars,  
or Jacob's ladder?  
No mountain to climb but this  
steep familiar garden;  
no score to read, no glossary,  
no grasp of space and time;  
where where shall a man stand?  
Among fresh delights  
green, pastoral, friendly,  
though the August heat  
forces the resting body to sweat  
and dust  
labels the roadside elms and hawthorns?  
Here.

We've fouled our nests. We've burned  
our boats. The rope  
we've cut away below us:  
"there's a wonderful view from here  
on a fine day". Posterity giggles.  
Ah! two fine pears  
left hanging on a fruitless tree.  
The blackbird's dead.  
Seasons interchange. Nitrates and  
phosphates disagree.  
An aching head, from heavy sunbeam  
and unresolved musing

on bright escutcheons in historical  
colours, silvered,  
enamelled by centuries of tears,  
semen, and blood.

Music sounds across birdsong  
an easy compulsion.

Here. All placid perhaps in  
afternoon sunshine:

woodpeckers, roses, magpies,  
the one dead walnut tree,

Ruth unclothed in marble among  
the yews, scratched

by peepington brambles: the noise  
of contemporary traffic

passing the church, the graveyard,  
the horse-chestnuts,

the high delightful garden,  
and the Seven Stars.

Here here shall a man stand  
holding to the crimson verge,  
the magic wand preserved from  
an ancient religion.

## TOM WRIGHT

### *Journeys*

**T**HE hump-backed hills make their slow safari  
to the absorbing earth. Across the hills  
a regiment of trees marshalls and drills.  
Its spearhead moves in file relentlessly  
towards the forest's anonimity.  
Scoring the hunchback like a thrusting lance,  
insinuating through the slow advance,  
the pilgrim rivers seek erasing sea.



The secret force that drives them drives in me ;  
drove through my fathers up the climbing years  
lifting them higher than their solid fears  
nearer and nearer to identity.  
Seething and circling, seeking to define  
the secret name of God, which may be mine.

## LEONARD CLARK

### *The liar*

**S**TRONG in repose,  
Do not forget  
The autumn rose  
Has still a subtle tongue,  
And petals that can burn  
With beauty when its face  
Is set  
In death.  
Remember, you are young  
And should not turn  
With fretting breath  
To find  
Some new embrace,  
Some faith apart,  
To brave the years.  
Only the mind  
Has tears ;  
Never the heart.

## JOHN BARRON MAYS

### *Fenland Seascape*

IT is a hint of what is sure to come  
This metaphor of winter closing in  
Upon the heart, the wind-thinned trees that lie  
Black on the pallor of the evening sky,  
The air aglint with frosty rime, three grey  
Lean rivers on the flat unending plain  
Moving like rainwet roadways to the sea.

Far on the saltings where the wild geese fly  
Above a land green-lichened by the tides  
Of lapsing generations, sea and sky  
And misty land melt in one hazy blur  
While the eye moves inevitably on  
From past to future and a ship-wrecked sun  
Snags its red spars in the entangling mist.

Nearby the cold imagination's caught  
By the ribbed ruins of what used to be  
The last farmhouse for miles, a beacontree  
Of light quenched in the floods that long ago  
Rose in the night and swallowed up the land.  
All that remains, half sunk in sucking sand,  
Gapes like a wreck unpurposed and awry,  
Its mildewed tiles and jutting sodden beams  
Stark to the weather and the vacant sky.

R. L. COOK

*Into this bay*

**I**NTO this bay the last great shield of light  
Is focussed now ; across the fading moor,  
Dusted with dusk, the gorse burns cloudily :  
The sea is dark as iron, only where  
A ripple cuts the shore the wound is bright.

And wind, that lonely prowler, maunders there,  
Smearing the night across the glimmering dunes,  
Whipping the rock-pools, catching at the spray :  
This is a time for insulated rooms,  
For slippers, radio and fireside chair.

But to the heart that like the gorse flames free  
And to the mind that wanders with the wind  
Across the darkening spaces of the soul  
The gathered light reflects peace from the sand,  
The prophet wind howls of eternity.

J. C. HALL

*Tess*

**W**HEN we two walked  
At the dawn of day  
Our happiness then  
Was as frail a spray  
As the nostril-fume  
Of the cows that came  
Through the milk-mist  
At milking-time.

How could I know  
What you meant then?  
Juno, Demeter,  
You called me when



Our clay unclouded  
In dawns chill gleams.  
I was ignorant still  
Of the soul's names.

But when you spoke  
Of that far hour  
When resurrection  
Touched beast and flower  
My simple faith  
Understood you then.  
Oh had you but pardoned  
Your Magdalen!

### MARGARET WILLY

#### *Lament for lovers*

**H**OW fear and pity haunt the heart of love  
With premonitions of mortality:  
For when in loving we are most alive—  
Hands tender, lips urgent in exploration—  
Then it is that I feel the flesh most threatened  
By all the dark corruption of the grave.

And O my darling, when at length your breath  
Is peaceful on my cheek, and head lies heavy  
In my arm's hollow, while the heart beneath  
This hand grows calm—I marvel that your body,  
Most intricately knit and quick with living,  
Wrought of so rare a blend of sense with reason,  
Must slowly be consumed by age and death.

Lie closer then, my love, that I may hold  
In touch and mind, known curve, familiar feature—  
More precious for their perishing—and fold  
Warm in my arms the vulnerable creature,  
Frail in the knowledge of its mortal nature:  
Cherish the mystery of human loving  
This hour against the creeping dark and cold.

## ERIC RATCLIFFE

### *Cyclic Adam*

IN the land of fish and heron  
and white candle maidens,  
a dancing queen of five wings  
collecting sea coral  
in a wind of no purpose,  
jumping by a lighthouse  
discovered the Last Man  
flat on his antique belly  
grotesque with wonder  
peering a stunted face  
into rocking weeds  
for gods and rare lights.  
Afterwards from a tree  
she noted his small teeth,  
watching him stretching for nuts  
naked as a puma.  
Hearing a temple bell  
she vanished in green dust,  
breaking holy ampules  
as a protection  
in case there were also serpents.

## MARGARET STANLEY-WRENCH

### *An Old Man's Hands*

**H**IS hands are those of my father's generation  
And speak to me in pity. Seventy summers  
Have laid a skin of brown on them, the knuckles  
Are bare and smooth with life, pared like old wood  
And sanded down to silk and ash. One finger  
Is gripped by an outmoded ring, wide, serviceable  
Gold. Work has ebbed from those fingers, as the sea  
Down ribs and groins of sand. Life recedes from them.  
What can they do now but lift in the spires of prayer  
Passive to the touch of love? Innocent hands  
Like shells, two lobes, which joined, nourish the pearl,  
The core of light, eternity's quiet seed.  
And over the skin, the mark of suffering man  
Burns in a livid scar. Close, luring, knitted,  
Clenched in the face of the world, they hold back all  
Like gnarled and watchful dogs, knotted on the knees,  
Guarding the secrets of the inviolate self,  
Until, unsealed in sleep, unfolding like flowers,  
And opening in the last frank gesture of man,  
They give back all, yield all at last, surrendering  
The knotted self to eternity, unbound  
In death's calm, final generosity.





## REVIEWS

*A Way of Looking* : Elizabeth Jennings (Andre Deutsch, 8s. 6d.).

*Poems 1948-1954* : Wrey Gardiner (Peter Russell, 8s. 6d.).

MISS Elizabeth Jennings is one of the poets associated with "The Movement" about which so much is being heard these days. Her second book, *A Way of Looking*, is aptly titled for, like most of the work of "The Movement" poets, her poems reflect attitudes of mind rather than states of feeling—and somewhat tenuous attitudes of mind at that. One must admire her delicacy and restraint, her sense of form and her careful use of language, but it is all rather prim and leaves one unmoved. To quote one of her own poems :

"Perhaps the deeper tragedy  
Is then the inability  
To change a thought into emotion  
And still to be an onlooker  
When all else passes by in passion."

Although Mr. Robert Conquest claims, in his recent anthology, that "The Movement" is concerned with "... the restoration . . . of the principle that poetry is written by and for the whole man, intellect, emotions, senses and all" (and no one could object if it proved to be true), one finds that, in fact, the emphasis is almost entirely upon the intellect and that emotions are suspect. This is especially so of Miss Jennings's work :

"*Bodiless* I would prove my passion  
By learning the character of each  
Landscape or person that I love,  
Clothing them only with contemplation."

(The italics are mine.) If the major criticism of her poetry is that it is a little too bodiless and too bloodless at present, too wrapped up in contemplation, there are exceptions, of course. Indeed, there are some very fine poems in this volume, of which *For a Child Born Dead* is probably the best example :

"But there is nothing now to mar  
Your clear refusal of our world.  
Not in our memories can we mould  
You or distort your character.  
Then all our consolation is  
That grief can be as pure as this."

Despite her failings (and one hopes that they are merely temporary), there can be little doubt that Miss Jennings is outstanding

amongst the poets of "The Movement" and hardly needs their phoney publicity to bolster her reputation.

In striking contrast, Mr. Wrey Gardiner is a poet of moods, impressions and feelings :

"Tireless in time the centuries turn and flow  
Into the deeper sea of one, the all, my dream,  
The all alone, eternal myth of man,  
This mountain seen in the dark backyard of my theme,  
The dolphin's history pictured in Time's sea  
In the tower's upper chamber far above the river  
Where the broken bridge stops short of the other bank  
And the undefended gateways of forgotten wars."

(*The Old Bridge at Avignon*).

—and, as the above quotation shows, perhaps too inclined to leave to his readers the task of linking up the symbols and images scattered throughout his work into a consistent pattern, so that whilst each poem adds something to the others, few poems seem to be complete in themselves. In one sense they can be regarded as a sequence. At least there is a pattern, and as Mr. Gardiner confesses to write "for poets and not literary businessmen", it may be that he feels justified in the demands he makes. Nevertheless, given too much elbow-room, he is apt to spread himself, and it is in the tighter discipline of the short poem that he is most successful, when the leap

"Of light and speed  
Towards truth,  
The quickening fire  
Of now"

becomes a recognisable and shared experience of value to both poet and reader. Such poems as *Final Minute*, *To the Memory of Constantine Cavafy*, and *A Word in Time* fittingly demonstrates Mr. Gardiner's lyrical talent.

A. P. COURTLAND.

*The Italian Influence in English Poetry* : A. Lytton Sells (Allen & Unwin, 30s.).

THE influence on English poetry of Italy, of the Italian way of life, both social and cultural, and of the Italian landscape, is particularly marked in the great poems written between the middle of the fourteenth and the end of the sixteenth centuries. From Chaucer to Southwell this period stands out as an age of Romantic expansion.



It would appear that Southwell, to whom Donne owed so much, is at last to receive the critical attention which is his due, and Professor Sells pays a well-deserved tribute to the quality of his uneven genius and the mystical vigour of his imagery. The poet's inspiration derived from his religious faith; his style and method from Italian models, particularly from Petrarch and Tansillo, and from his first-hand knowledge of Italy.

Professor Sells is, in fact, most illuminating when dealing with minor poets like Drayton and Greville, about whose work he makes many perceptive and revealing observations; with Sir Philip Sidney in relation to Petrarch; with Edmund Spenser, whose *Faerie Queen* was inspired by Ariosto and aided by Boiardo and Trissino; and with the work of the Scottish Chaucerians around the not insignificant figure of James I.

The author concedes the need for a comprehensive survey of his subject, covering verse drama as well as poetry and collating all the tentative studies of single authors and poems already published. His own contribution, an immensely readable, well-produced work of diffused scholarship, will prove a valuable guide to students of the period but, in attempting to assess the influence of Italian painting on our poets he ventures into uncharted waters with more enthusiasm than conviction. Having wisely omitted verse drama, he would have provided an even more useful book had he left consideration of painting for another volume. He would then have had more space for the poetry of Skelton, Wyatt, Ben Jonson, Robert Greene and Sir Walter Raleigh, all of whom, with the exception of Wyatt, are dismissed in brief sentences.

B. EVAN OWEN.

*Poetry Awards 1955* (Stanford University Press, \$3.00 : London, Geoffrey Cumberlege, 24s.).

**P**OETRY *Awards 1955*, the seventh volume in the Borestone Mountain series, maintains the high standards (both of contents and production) we have come to expect of these anthologies, and its range of form and subject and variety of treatment make it a pleasure to read. This year there is an innovation which allows the place-winning poems of poets who have exercised the right not to enter the actual competition to be included, so that the collection has been strengthened by the work of Robert Frost, Edna St. Vincent Millay and Robinson Jeffers.

One can understand the judges' difficulty in choosing between Robert Hillyer's *In My Library, Late Afternoon*, with its "notion

that old books can be bewitched / By aspects of a life they have enriched", and Phyllis McGinley's witty *In Praise of Diversity* :

"Rejoice that under cloud and star  
The planet's more than Maine or Texas.  
Bless the delightful fact there are  
Twelve months, nine muses, and two sexes;  
And infinite in earth's dominions  
Arts, climates, wonders and opinions."

Finally, it was decided that the poems were of equal merit, tying for first place, and the total of the first and second prizes was divided between the two poets. The third prize was awarded to Alastair Reid for his *Pigeons*. Two of last year's prize-winners, the late Robert P. Tristram Coffin and Elizabeth Coatsworth, must have been close runners-up this year, to judge by the quality of their contributions, and Donald Hall, Adrienne Cecile Rich, Peter Viereck, Eric Barker, John Ciardi and Charles Edward Eaton are all well represented. The only British contributors are Jon Silkin, Iain Crichton Smith and Dannie Abse. This anthology can be recommended to all who value poetry.

CARLTON WILLIS.

*Time and Other Poems* : Robert Cecil (Putnam, 3s. 6d.).

*Some Poems*: Erica Marx (Hand and Flower Press, 7s. 6d.).

*Gold* : Christine Brooke-Rose (Hand and Flower Press, 4s. 6d.).

*The Prometheans* : Alec Craig (Fortune Press, 6s.).

*Poems from Belmont* : A. E. Dodd (Fortune Press, 7s. 6d.).

*Experiment in Error* : Blanaid Salkeld (Hand and Flower Press, 7s. 6d.).

*Four Holy Sonnets* : Frederic Vanson (Gemini Publications, 3d.).

REVIEWING this first book elsewhere, I remarked that here was a man trying with desperate sincerity to tell himself the truth. Perhaps my adjective was misleading. His endeavour, indeed, was psychologically desperate, but none of the difficulty which he faced was visited on his style, which catches the quick contours of spoken syntax. Neither is this to suggest ragged ends : naturalness of movement and shapeliness of form are unusually united in this poet. Mr. Cecil's verse shows a high control of pathos, which he can evoke with the brevity of wit :

"But time is topsy-turvey as I know :  
Father above the ground and son below."

This book contains some of the best short poems I have read during the last ten years (*Goodbye, Dispossession, Walled Garden, The Question, Testing Time*). There is a touch of Thomas Hardy about this poet, but his verse is neater, his diction purer, and the deterministic obsession quite absent. (He has not, of course, Hardy's imaginative power). Mr. Cecil is as good as he is quiet and mannerly. His sense of heart-break, loss, and recovery is as civilised as it is deep.

Miss Marx's second volume reveals her as an original, sometimes experimental, poet. Shades of Garcia Villa and E. E. Cummings hover about the metaphysical arithmetic of *Conjugations of Love*; but to my way of thinking her talent succeeds best when she employs a mere regular mode to express her markedly individual mind. *Satan in Hell* shows her handling the rhymed quatrain with touches of real splendour, while the ballad metre of *Sinister Fairy Story* is used by her with both grim and gay distinction. Her ability in narrative is evinced in two further pieces: *The Song of Elizabeth Hobson*, and *The Ballad of Miss G. E. Webster*.

Miss Brook-Rose is a young ambitious poet. In *Gold* she has taken a theme of sad grandeur (the prison-camps of the Soviet East), and, apparently, doubled her difficulty by choosing a severe mediæval verse-form—that of the fourteenth-century *Pearl* which combines the native alliterative line with a complex French stanza-pattern. In addition, she resorts to the terms of alchemy to describe the changes in the souls of the victims. The result is much simpler than might be imagined. *Gold* is an impressive first publication, and introduces us to a poet whose field is not that of the miniaturist.

*The Prometheans* is Mr. Craig's third volume, and has a number of good things in it. The note of the 'Thirties fades faint upon the air, and the older gods replace the sages of reform. Some of us will have heard the poet reading a number of these pieces at the *Contemporary Music and Poetry Circle* (of which he was a co-founder). *August, The Atomists, and Sodom*, in three distinctive styles, are effective compositions; though I make one with Mr. John Bayliss in his justifiable admiration for the last stanza of Mr. Craig's *Adam*.

With Mr. Dodd, I feel, there exists a grave discrepancy between intelligence and auditory imagination. Mr. Dodd has learning of no mean order, and a worthy desire to exploit important themes; but a lack of aural discretion is constantly confounding his genuine power. Now and again, we detect the clear and pure melodic line—"Why weep for those who die on Glyder Vawr?"—but generally the verse is turgid or flat. One aspect of this heaviness is the choice



of unexpressive latinisms: *dormancy, uncoalescence, decrescent, centurial, impercipience*. Mr. Dodd's language needs a thorough thinning-out; and perhaps the less excitable discipline of prose might help him to achieve this.

Miss Salkeld at 75, a veteran follower of the Muse, is, as her title suggests, very much an explorer. She has all the discoverer's impetuosity (see her use of dots and dashes), and her verse is full of the first gleams of beauty. Her flair for spontaneous research is considerable, but she lacks the skill to consolidate. In her poetic system, there are no stars—only meteors. But her long poem *The Woman Gardener* constitutes an impressive near-success.

When a modern poet, given to free verse, employs the sonnet, we wait the upshot with premonitions of hope and disaster. Mr. Van-son's poems absolve our holy dread. His four sonnets possess a sound rhetorical sincerity, and the first is one of the most accomplished pieces of religious verse I have seen since David Gascoynes *Miserere* sequence. If I say the sentiment is traditionally Christian, I do not mean it is tightly doctrinaire, or that the poet's language is without innovation. He speaks originally, for example, of Christ's "all-gaining loss," and of "heavenhope" which "undoes our fall,"

DEREK STANFORD.

*The Second Man*: Louis O. Coxe (Minnesota University: London, Cumberlege, 22s.).

*Some Phases of Love*: P. D. Cummins (Macmillan, 8s. 6d.).

*Company of Two*: Paul Casimir and Derek Parker (Zebra Poets, 2s.).

*The Courtley Season*: Richard Easton (Zebra Poets, 1s.).

PROFESSOR Coxe, joint author of *Billy Budd*, offers his second book to a world concerned with rather different business. He takes his stand with his New England ancestry:

"Below the elm, whole on that hill,  
My father's house abides me still;"

and sums up his observations in a "traditionalist" verse which contains in its smoothness a surprising variety of experience and skill. An art which dictates the use of "whole" in the first line quoted above is obviously live and watchful: it allows descriptions of Hannah Dustin's castration of the raping red-man, Jefferson's architecture, Beowulf, the Indian Mutiny, and today's crisis, to fit into a framework carpentered with craftsmanship. "The image of our time is formed of cloud"—whether the American way of life turns

Plato's cave into a cinema or American poets blench to read such firm "traditional" verse, nothing more solid and less nebulous has come from the States in recent years.

Turning to Miss P. D. Cummins is to switch from detachment to involvement, from precise observation to frenzied hysteria. Here and there she seems to contain her violent apprehension within the comparative calmness of a sonnet; yet vehemence fetches her out fighting and screaming against some terror not quite comprehensible to the reader. The poems are thus on two planes, one low and reduced, the other high and ululating. To the new-born child she says "let me now forswear / The smallest part / In your bright parenthood". She asks to be free from "the hocus-pocus of the double-bed" and describes the mantrap in which "these creatures, caught and racked, / Lie one atop the other, broken-backed". She has vigour, and a thousand symbols of frustration and anxiety. Her main faults are repetition of words and a straining on an unvaried level.

Paul Casimir and Derek Parker are stable-mates in *Company of Two*. Mr. Casimir is neat, literary, musical, skilful, impeccably phrased, with a wide background. Mr. Parker is more concerned with matters either classical or up to the minute, more personal in image and fancy, and no less skilful. Both have limits, and know it. Both are worth reading.

Mr. Easton's eighteen sonnets display him as delicate, sensitive, passionate and courtly; not fully fledged. When he has rid himself of obsolete words and phrases he will be ready for the world's impact.

HUGH CREIGHTON HILL.



